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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

April 26, 1963

PLACE: The Kremlin, in the Office of the  
Chairman of Council of Ministers

TIME: 3:00 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS: N. S. Khrushchev  
Andrei Gromyko  
S. G. Lapin  
Viktor Sukhodrev - translator  
Under Secretary W. Averell Harriman  
Ambassador Foy D. Kohler  
Mr. Michael V. Forrestal  
Mr. William H. Sullivan

After an exchange of pleasantries and some recollections of the arrangement of office furnishings in the time of Stalin, Governor Harriman opened the conversation by handing the Chairman a letter from President Kennedy. A Russian translation of the letter was read immediately by Mr. Sukhodrev. Chairman Khrushchev expressed his thanks for the letter and his agreement with its contents.

Mr. Khrushchev then went on to say that he fully shared President Kennedy's concern over the deterioration of the situation in Laos and pointed out that it was just as unpleasant for the Soviets as it was for anyone else. He stressed that the Soviet Union had no one in Laos except its Ambassador and that

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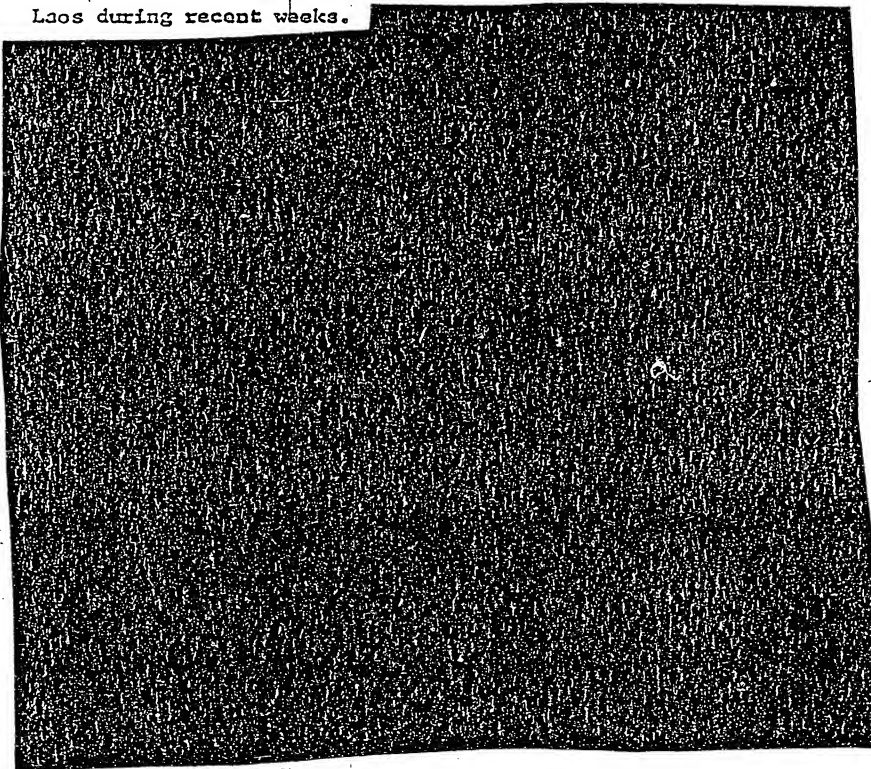
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the Soviet government, therefore, had very limited information on events in Laos and very limited ability to influence the situation.

He said that he and his government were deeply concerned over the political assassinations which had taken place in Laos during recent weeks.



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Governor Harriman answered Mr. Khrushchev by first pointing out that two of the Pathet Lao ministers who had left Vientiane had now returned to the city and mentioned their names. Mr. Khrushchev said he did not recognize their names, as he knew only a few of them. The Governor then stated that the President wants the cease-fire restored. The United States regrets that the Pathet Lao attacked Kong Le's forces. He considers it important to prevent further fighting, and we feel that the most important need is to set up the ICC in the Plaine des Jarres as Prince Souvanna has proposed.

He said he knew that the President will be gratified with Mr. Khrushchev's statement that the Soviet Union wishes to preserve a unified and neutral Laos, and that the President

wanted him to underline United States intentions to do the same. He said that perhaps while he was here the United States and Soviets could analyze how best to go about this. In this connection, he reported that our information indicated that the Soviet Ambassador had recently been cooperative in Vientiane with both the British Ambassador and with the United States Ambassador, Mr. Unger.

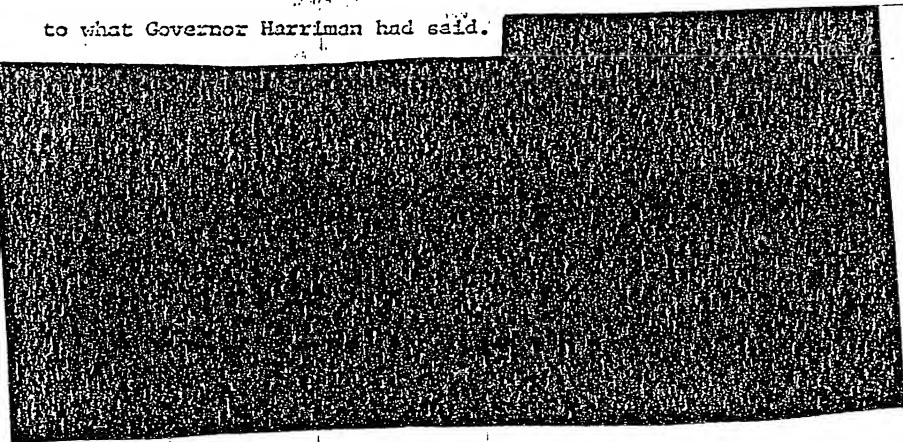
Governor Harriman stressed that the most disturbing factor in the current situation in Laos is the unwillingness of the Pathet Lao to permit the ICC to remain in the Plainades Jarres. He pointed out that the first responsibility of the ICC is the supervision and control of the cease-fire. He hoped, among other things on which we could work together, that we could develop joint action to install the ICC. There were, of course, many other problems but since the most important one was to stop the fighting he felt this was the most immediate task before us.

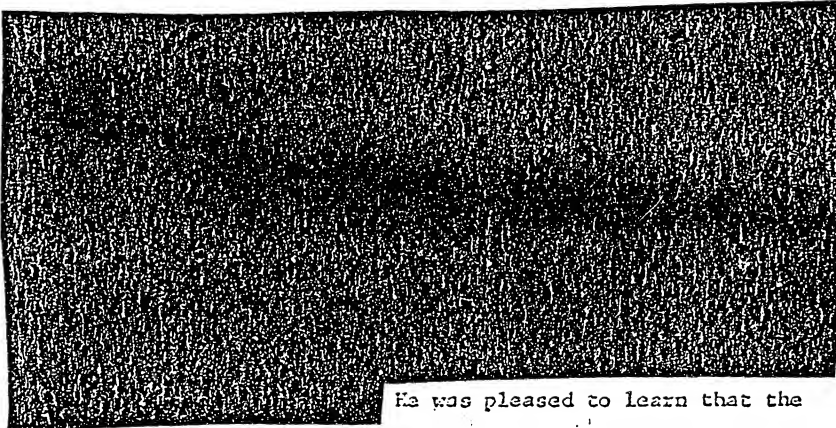
He agreed with the Chairman that integration of the military forces was important and recalled that the United States had sought at Geneva to have the ICC responsibility for this included in the text of the agreement; but had dropped its insistence at the last moment because of allegations that it

was interference in the internal affairs of Laos. As regards the guards and police forces in Vientiane, the Governor reminded Mr. Khrushchev that both the neutrals and the Pathet Lao ministers had their own guards and indeed that it was one of the neutralist guards who had shot Quinn. The United States regretted that assassination and regretted even before that the assassination of Colonel Katsana.

Finally, the Governor reiterated that the first step must be to stop the fighting and to get the ICC into the Plaine des Jarres.

Chairman Khrushchev said that he had stated the Soviet position in general but now wished to reply in specific terms to what Governor Harriman had said.





He was pleased to learn that the two ministers had returned to the city and hoped this was a good sign.

Governor Harriman said he hoped that the Soviets could make it known publicly that they desire to have the ICC stationed in the Plaine des Jarres. All the prestige of the Soviet Union both as a signatory and as co-chairman would have great influence in bringing this about. The Governor said that we had given Mr. Gromyko a copy of a letter from Souvanna Phouma and that we have heard from General Phoumi both to the effect that those officials were agreeable to having the ICC move freely about in the territory which each control. All that was needed in order to have the ICC moving throughout the country was a

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similar indication from the Pathet Lao. Since the Soviets had great influence with the Pathet Lao, Governor Harriman urged Chairman Khrushchev to make the Soviet position known to them.

Mr. Khrushchev interrupted to ask who it was that the United States influenced in Laos. Governor Harriman replied that we had exerted a great deal of influence on General Phoumi in order to get him to accept the agreement. We had twisted his arm because Phoumi had not cared for the terms of the agreement. However, since then Phoumi has been fully cooperating. Khrushchev replied that in Russia the expression is that one twists something else. Governor Harriman said that he had asked Mr. Pushkin for technical assistance on this point at Geneva and perhaps if he had followed the Russian method Phoumi would have agreed sooner.

Laughingly Mr. Khrushchev said that he did not think we should split up the Princes this way. He did not know much about princes, he was a miner and if we wanted to talk about mining he could show Governor Harriman something interesting.

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He then took from the table a chunk of ore which he said had recently been mined in Norilsk near Krasnoyarsk in Siberia. He said the ore contained 5-6% nickel, 18 to 25% copper and had a gold content of 1 1/2 grams per ton which was better than some of the ore mined in the producing gold fields. Governor Harriman congratulated him on this find. The Chairman said his government was investing 500 million rubles in exploiting this ore and expected not only would they be able to regain the entire capital investment within five years, but they would also be able to export out of this production. The Governor said there were many other resources in the Soviet Union not fully exploited, and mentioned the very large iron ore deposits in North Kazakhstan which Mr. Khrushchev had arranged for him to visit. Khrushchev answered that the Soviets had just discovered a vast oil and gas field near Tyumen on the Lena beyond Lake Baikal.

The Governor asked whether this was the source of the oil which the Soviets were shipping to China. The Chairman said, "no, that oil came from the Urals but since the Chinese use

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very little oil they take very little from us". The Governor observed, "you have more oil than you know what to do with and many years' reserves not yet exploited". Khrushchev replied, "we know what to do with it; this is no problem. The Soviet economy is in good shape". However, he expected the West would begin screaming again that the Soviets are in a crisis because he had just made a long speech about economic reorganization. He wanted the Governor to know that this reorganization was entirely subordinated to the task of intensifying mass production, especially in engineering and that he should not read false inferences into the speech.

Mr. Khrushchev said that the Soviet Union has vast reserves but that the United States does not wish to cooperate with it in the economic field. To use a Russian expression, you want to "chase us into a pipe", by this business of refusing to let the Germans sell us steel pipe. Who were the President's advisers who advised him so stupidly?

Governor Harriman said that nothing would please the President more than to be able to relax tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union everywhere so that we could begin

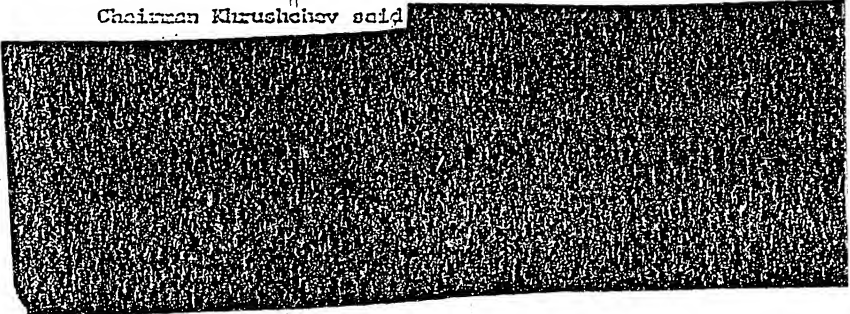
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to cooperate in the scientific field, the economic field and elsewhere. The President looks upon Laos as a symbol of our cooperation and feels it important that we achieve cooperation there because if we can't cooperate in that case, how could we hope to cooperate in other fields.

Chairman Khrushchev said



Governor Harriman said the outside interference was the problem, the United States had definite information the Viet Minh were there. Mr. Gromyko



 Why don't we agree to let the ICC investigate these charges and move about the country.

Mr. Khrushchev said it was all right for him to have the ICC go to the particular points in the country where there were complaints provided the Laotian government agrees. He

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then asked, "Are you a religious man, Mr. Harriman?" The Governor said that his grandfather had been a clergyman. Khrushchev said, "Will you swear on a bible that the Viet Minh are there?" Harriman replied, "I have not seen them personally but they have been seen by people in whose word I have trust. I would be willing to swear that I believe they are there. Would Mr. Gromyko be willing to swear on a bible that the Chiang Kai-shek forces are there?" Khrushchev said that Gromyko was a non-believer. He could not use the bible. Perhaps he could use a copy of Das Kapital. The Governor said, "either Das Kapital" or, pointing to a portrait of Marx, "swear by the beard of Karl Marx".

Khrushchev said, "Let's try another approach. Let's each bet a million dollars whether or not the Viet Minh are there. You have many millions and you would not mind losing one." Harriman said that he would be willing to give a million dollars if the Viet Minh would all get out of Laos. Seriously, however, he wanted the Chairman to know that President Kennedy believes the Viet Minh are there. Gromyko seems to believe that the Chiang Kai-shek forces are there. Why

wouldn't it be the thing to do to let the ICC go out and check on the Viet Minh and the Chiang Kai-shek troops?

Khrushchev said, [REDACTED]

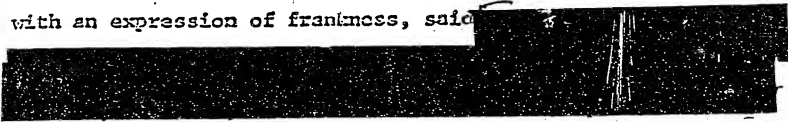
[REDACTED] Harriman said the United States is making no accusations against the Soviet Union but as co-chairman, the Soviet Union has a responsibility to see that the "socialist groups" behave in accordance with the Geneva agreement, and if the United States did not behave, the Soviet side could call on Lord Howe to tell us to behave. After a certain confusion in the translation in which it was explained to Khrushchev that the Governor was referring to "socialist signatories" of the agreement, Khrushchev said Mr. Harriman was very clever in trying to put such responsibility on him. The international socialist movement is built on the principle of mutual respect for sovereignty. "No socialist state interferes in the internal affairs of any other. Each state makes and keeps its own agreements, but you, Mr. Harriman, have not kept an agreement you made with me four years ago. You agreed at that time to become my economic adviser and you have not fulfilled your agreement."

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Mr. Khrushchev and the Governor, in some good humor, reviewed the details of Mr. Khrushchev's employment offer, including a dacha which the Chairman said was still waiting for Harriman to occupy. He said he had given the ground hog found on the premises to his grandchildren. Mr. Harriman then asked about Khrushchev's family and his grandchildren at which point Khrushchev said he now had two great grandchildren. Harriman said that despite the fact that Khrushchev was younger, he was ahead of Harriman on this point because Harriman as yet had no great grandchildren and must conclude that his grandchildren were less active than Khrushchev's. Khrushchev said the trouble was they were capitalists and this just proved that the socialist system was out-producing the capitalist system.

Returning to the subject of Laos, Governor Harriman again repeated that if we could smooth out this business in Laos we could make it easier to cooperate in other fields. Khrushchev, with an expression of frankness, said



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Once again he tried to leave the subject and returned to twitting Governor Harriman on having defaulted on a bilateral agreement to become the Chairman's economic adviser.

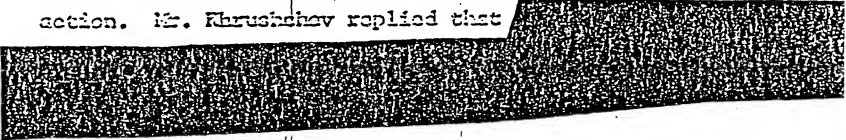
Governor Harriman said that the Chairman reminded him of a story he had told Mr. Gromyko about Stalin. During the war when the Governor was Ambassador in Moscow he had come to see Stalin in this same room. He had said he wanted to talk about the Poles, a subject President Roosevelt had frequently instructed him to raise. Stalin replied, "The Poles, the Poles, can't you think of anything else to talk about except the Poles. They have made trouble all through history and they always will." The Governor said he suspected Mr. Khrushchev felt a little the same way about the Laotians.

He added, however, that he knew the President would be pleased with the statement which Khrushchev had just made but would like to make one additional suggestion. He would like to ask the Chairman to have his Ambassador in Laos use his influence to get the ICC moving around the country, to seek out either the Viet Minh or the Chiang Kai-shek forces that might be there.

Khrushchev said that



Harriman said that this was true but he wished the Chairman would make that a positive rather than a negative statement. As co-chairman, the Soviets and the British could do a great deal to influence the ICC to take action. Mr. Khrushchev replied that



Governor Harriman hoped that the Soviet and American Ambassadors in the field could exchange information and co-operate to make it easier to carry out the agreements between the Chairman and the President.

Mr. Khrushchev said he agreed and they would do all in their power to have such an exchange. Governor Harriman also suggested that if there were any complaints there, the Ambassadors should inform each other about them. If the Soviets had any complaints here, they should tell Ambassador Kohler. The Chairman agreed. In finishing on this subject, the Governor pointed out that Laos may be small but that President Kennedy feels if progress can be made there we can do more on other subjects and in other parts of the world.

Khrushchev said, [REDACTED]

Harriman said: "Germany?

Can't you think of anything else to talk about? The President is concerned about Cuba."

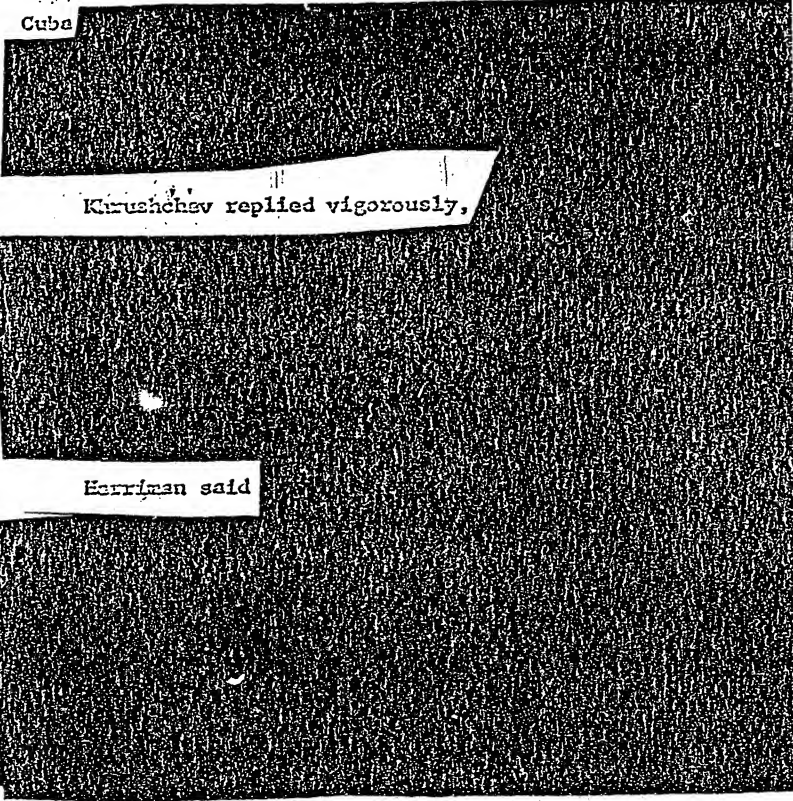
Khrushchev answered with some emotion: [REDACTED]



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Harriman said we had no substantial troops in any of the countries the Chairman mentioned, except Germany and Japan. The President is concerned about Soviet troops in Cuba



Khrushchev replied vigorously,

Harriman said

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In a sober manner, Khrushchev replied